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TAGS: KPAO KMDR
SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION IN SEOUL

Subject: Media Reaction; Seoul

U.S. presidential election

"Cooperation and Trust"

Right-of-center JoongAng Ilbo editorialized (11/08): "The ROK-U.S. alliance may have more room to grow and be improved upon during Obama's tenure, as he has long advocated multilateral diplomacy, emphasizing cooperation and joint efforts with the international community."

Free Trade Agreement

"Prepare for Renegotiation of ROK-U.S. FTA"

Choi Tae-wook, professor of the Graduate School of International Studies at Hallym University observed in left-leaning Hankyoreh Shinmun (11/10): "The most unsettling aspect of the ROK-U.S. FTA is that it could reduce the government's authority over the market. A good example of that is the investor-state dispute settlement (ISD), under which foreign investors can file a suit with an international arbitration organization against the countries in which they have invested.. Under this mechanism, it would be difficult for our central or local governments to map out and implement regulations or public policies out of concerns about the possibility of lawsuit... The recent U.S.-sparked financial crisis clearly tells us the dangers of non-regulation and deregulation. Any proper government would now realize a need for regulation and try to strengthen the role of the government in the market. The ROK's ruling Democratic Party and Democratic Labor Party should use any possible call by Washington for renegotiation of the ROK-U.S. FTA as an opportunity to demand that the ISD be deleted from the FTA and to remove or reduce the neo-liberalistic nature of the agreement."

"We Should Not Shake up the ROK-U.S. FTA"

Lee Joon-kyu, head of the Americas Bureau at the Korea Institute for International Economic Policy, observed in right-of-center JoongAng Ilbo (11/10): "When the Obama administration is inaugurated, it will likely call for renegotiation on the automobile sector of the ROK-U.S. FTA. However, we should persuade the Obama administration (not to demand renegotiation), saying that renegotiation will break a balance in the economic interests of both nations and damage the ROK-U.S. alliance. The ROK's National Assembly should also show its policy consistency by promptly approving the free trade pact."

"Will the ROKG Intend to Continue With Its Failed Foreign and North Korea Policy?"

Left-leaning Hankyoreh Shinmun editorialized (11/08): "The ROKG and the ruling party have reaffirmed their determination to ratify the ROK-U.S. FTA at an early date and have decided to send a delegation to the U.S. This behavior is unreasonable. Besides controversy over the contents of the FTA, it is irresponsible to seek market integration with the U.S. at a time when the U.S. economy is in chaos. Rather than adhering to the free trade pact, the ROK would do well to focus its efforts to overcome the economic crisis, while remembering the consequences of its decision to resume U.S. beef imports."

DPRK, nuclear program, Six-Party Talks

"Relations between the Obama Administration and North Korea Is up to Pyongyang,"

Conservative Chosun Ilbo editorialized (11/10): "North Korea should take note that president-elect Obama is not, like his predecessor, obliged to achieve something before his term expires. The U.S. now has a time to review its North Korea policy again from first principles. And they are complete abolition of the nuclear program and prevention of nuclear proliferation. The difference between Obama and Bush is merely in methodology in achieving that end."

"North Korea Policy; Obama's Change and Our Response"

Yoon Young-kwan, professor of International Politics at Seoul National University, observed in right-of-center JoongAng Ilbo (11/10): "While the U.S. Republican government simply regarded North Korea's nuclear development as a security matter and took little interest in its root cause, the Obama administration is expected to admit that North Korea's nuclear ambitions stemmed from its security anxiety and diplomatic isolation, and to help the North resolve these concerns. In addition, while the Bush administration dangled the establishment of diplomatic ties with Pyongyang in front of the North as a reward for its nuclear abandonment, the Obama administration is likely to use diplomatic relations as an incentive for the North to fulfill its promise to denuclearize."

"Expectations and Fantasies about Obama's Diplomacy"

Editorial writer Kwon Soon-tae observed in conservative Dong-a Ilbo (11/10): "Obama is highly likely to engage in aggressive diplomacy with North Korea in a give-and-take manner. However, he did not forget to warn that, if North Korea does not implement its agreement, it will have to pay the price. If Pyongyang only intends to gain benefits without a complete nuclear development, its direct talks with the Obama administration will fall far short of its expectations."

Stephens